

A

REVIEW

OF THE

Affairs of *FRANCE*:

With Observations on TRANSACTIONS at Home.

Thursday, September 27. 1705.

THEY that search the Truth of every Circumstance, make the best Defence for the Church of *England*, and nothing can be a greater Scandal upon the Church, than to say, that the Truth will not Vindicate her.

That she is Truly Reform'd, I have already Express'd my self at large; That she is Totally Reform'd, and Uncapable of a farther Reformation, I have already offer'd, and the best Divines of the Church of *England*, will joyn with me, their Infallibility being no more pretended to by them in the Article of Reformation, than in any other particular.

From hence I Infer,

1. That being Truly Reform'd, it is Impossible she can make any Allowances to the Church of *Rome*, or go back to any of those things, from whence she is Reform'd, without a horrible Scandal upon the Sincerity and Necessity of the first Reformation it self, pre-

varicating with her own Profession, and saying back again, that very Truth for which her Martyrs Died, her Champions Fought, and which the present Age of her Heroes have Defended at all Extremities.

2. That being not Completely Reform'd, 'tis not Impossible for her to be Reconciled to those her *Protestant Dissenting* Brethren, who pressing for a yet farther Reformation, have Separated from her, because she has refused to follow them in the same Endeavour.

I Endeavour to be as Concise in this, as I can, tho' a Head of the last Consequence, and of Infinite Concern to the *Protestant* Interest, because these Papers aim but at a General State of Things, not Designing to enter into all the Particulars; however, if any Man will deny either of these Generals, I am ready to Defend them, viz. Either that the Church is Truly Reform'd, or that she is not Completely Reform'd.

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'Tis

'Tis strange any Member of the Church of *England* should pretend, that she is not Truly Reform'd, which, 'tis plain, she must not be, if she ought to go back again to that Church from whence she separated at first; if the Church of *Rome* will make Allowances, Charity Directs all the Church of *England* to receive her, to open the Arms of *Christians Love*, to Embrace all those, that *however late*, shall follow the Steps of their Neighbours, who Reform'd before them; but to Talk of making Allowances to *Rome*, to Talk of Meeting half way a Church out of whom the Protestant Reformation came, as a *flying from the Wrath to come*, is to Talk of Unravelling their Reforming Work, and turning back to those Errors, and to that Darkness, from whence they are long ago Advanced.

I shall take Occasion to speak more largely to this, when I point these Papers more particularly to those who have the Power to Direct and Determine in these Weighty Cases, to whom I shall, with suitable Respect, apply this Case, and propose perhaps something, which however it may come from a Weak Hand, may, if earnestly pursued, by their powerful Application, tend to the General Good of the Protestant Religion, and the particular Advantage of the Church of *England*, and of all the Protestants in this Nation, of what Denomination or Opinion soever.

Let no Man think that this Paper shall be Directed to the Convocation of the Church of *England*, either to Affront or Expose them; it would be contrary to that Healing Principle, which the Author of it professes, and which he earnestly pursues, and not to attempt any thing that shou'd farther Divide us; a General Union in all Cases, as well Religious as Politick, among *English Men and Christians*, is the Sincere Endeavour of this Undertaking; Cavil, Insult, Banter and Reproach, shall, by God's Grace, have no Effect to prevent the Design, or to Discourage its Undertaker.

He thinks it a peculiar Blessing from Heaven to this Nation, that a Spirit of Peace, Temper, and Charity, seems at this time to possess the Wisest and Best of the Inhabitants, both Publick and Private; Providence has

kindled this Flame in the Breasts of all true Lovers of their Country; the Iron is hot, now is the Juncture to Strike with an Universal Consent; and who knows, but a Peace of Parties, a Peace of Opinions, and of Charity among Protestants of all Perswasions, may be hammer'd out, tho' with some Difficulty, in spite of all the Opposition of Parties, the Cross Desigs of Enemies, and the Aversion of particular Sects among us; What Blessings from God and Man shall attend the Head of that Man, who shall be the Happy Instrument of bringing this to pass? How should this Nation Consecrate his Memory, and raise Statues to his Fame! Let then some Courtesie be allow'd to him that shall make the Honest Attempt, tho' he has neither the Power, nor the Time to finish it; like Puisse Council he opens the Cause, and leaves it for abler Heads to carry on to that Perfection, which he hopes God in his Infinite Mercy has Design'd for the Happiness of these Distracted Kingdoms.

From this Principle, I must start a Question to the Confounders of our Religious Peace; *Why, Gentlemen, is it possible for the Church of England to be Reconciled to the Papists of France, and not to her own weaker Brethren, the Dissenters in England?*

This is a Paradox new started by the Author of *Regale and Pontificate*, a Book Calculated for the Ruine, and Exposing the Church of *England*, and to prepare the Minds of Men to be yet farther and farther separated from her; If there be more probability of her going back again to *Papery*, than of her coming to a farther Reformation, who would joyn with such a Church? Who would have any thing to do with her? Certainly no Body but he that can with her go back to *Papery*.

And why not joyn with the Dissenters? or, Why not yield them some Things in order to it? Some Things, which being Indifferent in their own Nature, have no other Necessity but what they receive from Humane Invention: The Question has so much Reason, and Unanswerable Necessity in it, according to the Laws of Charity, that the Authors of these Debates have but one shift to fly to, and that is, to say they are ready to do it, have often offered to do it, and the

Dissenters

Dissenters reject it, and will be content with nothing short of; all which the *Memorial* calls Mutilating and Adulterating the Constitution of the Church of *England*.

This indeed were a good Argument, and I could not have any Plea to bring against the force of it, were it not for one, to *them Unhappy Accident*, viz. That there is not one Word of it True; and for this I need not go back to the *Savoy* Conference, tho' if I did, it would, beyond all possible Reply, confirm what I am upon; but I refer to the Living Testimony of the Reverend Dr. *J. —ne*, Prolocutor of the Convocation, in the . . . Year of the late King-*William*, who when the King, from his Pious and Sincere Desire of such a Union, had caused some Mediums to be thought on for the Reconciling us all, and the Thing was started in the Convocation, gave this General Answer, *Nolumus Leges Angliæ Mutare*; this Robust Answer Shock'd the Proposal, and his Majesty saw it was in vain to attempt it.

Shall any Man now have the Assurance to say, The Church has often attempted, by yielding up her Indifferent Articles to reconcile her self to *Protestant Dissenters*? Had the *Memorial* had any Reputation for Modesty, this very Clause would have Destroy'd it all, in which it says to this purpose,

If parting with a few Ceremonies, however significant, we may or do still believe they would Engage the Dissenters to join heartily with the Church, we would Sacrifice them to their Scruples, Memorial, P. 27.

Was ever any thing offered in the World like this? Was ever such a Stock of Arrogance put into Print? You would Sacrifice them? Who are you that offer it? Convocation you cannot be, let the Prolocutor speak for you; High-Church you cannot be, let your frequent Insulting your Brethren for showing too much Countenance to the *Dissenters*, answer for them; Who is this *We*? Where are you to be found? And by what Authority do you speak?

To Convince the World of this Sham Offer, and that it is a meer Fiction of the Brain, and Fancy of this Projector, let us see for once, what a General Offer will do; and tho' tis True, this cannot be a General Of-

fer, the *Dissenters*, to their Great Misfortune, having never acted any thing as a Body, yet with much more Authority than this Author can make this Offer.

Let us see but one Step made to this Work, satisfy the World of the Truth and Sincerity of your Design, by the Practice; let us see your Ceremonies Sacrific'd, or but some of them, as shall be Nam'd, and if not all, yet Vast Numbers of the *Dissenters* will come in to you, and I could Answer for the Truth of it.

This would be the way Effectually to lessen the Body of *Dissenters*; indeed all your *Shortest Ways*, your Gallows and Gallies would be Spools to this; open but your Pale, and pull up the Hedge of Ceremonies that is Planted about your Worship, those Briers and Thorns of Humane Invention, which so many have scratch'd their Faces with, and so few have been Converted by, and you at once open a Door to such a Union in *England*, as I must tell the High Churchmen, would be very Fatal to them; and for that Reason I cannot believe, supposing them to be in their Wits, that they can ever Desire it, and I am certain, they never gave any Testimony that they did ever Endeavour it.

If any Man ask the Author of this, for they are very fond of bringing such Things home to Particulars, Whether he would come in upon such a Concession? I readily Answer, Yes, with all my Soul; and among my small Acquaintance, I am positive I could Answer for a Thousand Families of *Dissenters*, that would do the same; and that not from an Eagerness to come into Places, or to avoid the Disadvantages of Dissenting, but from a meer Principle of Love, Charity, Peace, and Christian Union, which ought to reign among *Protestants* of every kind, and which they would be glad to succeed these Universal Distractions that have Divided this Nation, even to their very near Destruction.

From this Principle, we sincerely Desire God would open the Eyes of the Rulers of the Church of *England*, so to advance towards this Blessed Work, that they might not only Sacrifice a few, but all those Plants which grow within their Pale, and which

which are not of our Heavenly Father's Planting.

Here would be the End of our Divisions! We joy'n with them in all Doctrinal Points; Three Articles, and one Clause of the Fourth, contain all our Differences; and these all relate to Indifferent Things; the *Regale* and *Pontificate* Comprise them all; the Apostles yielded much more to the *Jews*, to bring them into the Church; abating things which they have no Authority to Impose, would heal all this Breach: If this one Dilemma was removed, if this Door of Imposition was set open, Gentlemen of the Church, it would do more to Demolish our Meeting-Houses, and Silence our Ministers, than all your Acts of Uniformity, Corporation Laws, or all the Coertion of Twenty five Years Ecclesiastick Policy.

'Tis Impossible any Man should say, without flying to a Refuge of Lyes and Forgeries, That the *Dissenters* cannot be reconcil'd to the Church, till you have thus made the Experiment, till you have thus opened the Door to them; no Man can be said to refuse that was never ask'd or offer'd; it is a plain Case to me, That this Abatement of Ceremonies was never offer'd to the *Dissenters*, at least we do not know when or by whom; we find no Footsteps of it, and would be glad to know, What it is they call, and offer; by whom, and to whom; and from what Authority it was made? Which, till it is done, I must be allow'd to say, The *Dissenters* know nothing of the Matter; I dare say they would be glad to hear of it, would readily Enter into a Treaty about it, and perhaps make greater Concessions, than most People expect.

But till Mr. *Memorial*, or his Party, can tell us when this Matter has been Proposed and Rejected, I think he cannot without a *Corinthian* Hardness, pretend to tell the World, it is Impracticable to Reconcile the Church of *England* to the *Protestant Dissenters*.

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